

## CLAIMS

### I CLAIM:

1. A program for the organization of ideas using an electronic computer, the electronic computer having a user input device and a graphics display, the program comprising instructions executed on the electronic computer to:
  - (i) accept text identified ideas from the user via the user-input device;
  - 5 (ii) accept at least one-idea hierarchy instructions from the user via the user-input device, the hierarchy instructions relating the accepted ideas in dependencies;
  - (iii) display representations of the ideas on the graphic display as organized into levels defined by common dependency;
  - (iv) accept from the user numeric priorities for the ideas of at least one level; and
  - 10 (v) arrange the ideas of the at least one level on the graphic display according to the priorities.
2. The program of claim 1 wherein the displayed representation of the ideas are text displayed in a text outline according to the dependencies of ideas associated with the text, the text outline including paragraphs arranged beneath other paragraphs on which they depend; and
  - 5 wherein the paragraphs of a level are ordered according to the priorities of the ideas to which they are related.
3. The program of claim 1 wherein the displayed representations of the ideas are node symbols arranged in a tree according to their dependencies, the tree structure including branches visually connecting node symbols to other node symbols on which they depend; and
  - 5 wherein the nodes of a level are ordered according to the priorities of the ideas to which they are related.

4. The program as recited in claim 1 wherein the computer further executes the stored program to provide a list of representations of identified ideas of a level and wherein priorities are assigned by the user by changing the order of the representations of identified ideas within the list.

5. The program as recited in claim 4 wherein the computer further executes the stored program to allow changing of order of representations of identified ideas by selection of a given representation of an identified idea as displayed on the graphics display using the user input device and moving the representations of the identified idea within the list as displayed on the graphic display device using the user input device.

6. The program as recited in claim 5 wherein the computer further executes the stored program so that when the representation of an identified idea is moved within the list to modify the priority of at least one idea identifier so that the priorities of all identified ideas in the list remain monotonically decreasing.

7. The program as recited in claim 1 wherein the computer further executes the stored program to provide a list of representations of identified ideas of a common hierarchical level and to display a slide control for each identified idea in the list that may be manipulated by the user input device to enter the number priority value.

8. The program as recited in claim 7 wherein the computer further executes the stored program to decrease the number priority value of all specific identified ideas in the list to beneath a given identified idea to a value less than the value of the given identified idea.

9. The program as recited in claim 7 wherein the computer further executes the stored program to increase the value of the number priority value of all specific identified ideas in the list above a given identified idea to a value at least equal to the value of the numeric priority of the specific identified idea.

10. A program for the organization of ideas using an electronic computer, the electronic computer having a user input device and a graphics display, the program comprising instructions executed on the electronic computer to:

- (i) accept text identified ideas from the user via the user-input device;
- 5 (ii) accept at least one idea hierarchy instructions from the user via the user input device, the hierarchy instructions relating the accepted ideas into predefined level categories levels according to dependencies;
- (iii) display representations of the ideas on the graphic display as organized into levels defined by common dependency; and
- 10 (iv) after acceptance of a given text identified idea from the user in at least one predefined level, prompt the user as to possible additional text identified ideas for inclusion in a next level having ideas dependent on the idea of the given text identified idea.

11. The program of claim 10 wherein the predefined categories are issue, position and argument and wherein the user is prompted with possible arguments when the given text identified idea is a position and the user is prompted with possible positions when the given text identified idea is an issue.

12. The program as recited in claim 11 wherein the user is prompted with a set of open-ended questions.

13. The program as recited in claim 12 wherein the open-ended questions are augmented by text from the identified ideas of the given position.

14. The program as recited in claim 10 wherein the computer further executes the stored program to allow the user to select from a set of predefined generic identified ideas and hierarchies and to provide an editor for editing the predefined generic identified ideas and hierarchies.

15. The program of claim 10 wherein the displayed representation of the ideas are text displayed in a text outline according to the dependencies of ideas associated with the text, the text outline including paragraphs arranged beneath other paragraphs on which they depend; and

5 wherein the paragraphs of a level are ordered according to the priorities of the ideas to which they are related.

16. The program of claim 10 wherein the displayed representations of the ideas are node symbols arranged in a tree according to their dependencies, the tree structure including branches visually connecting node symbols to other node symbols on which they depend; and

5 wherein the nodes of a level are ordered according to the priorities of the ideas to which they are related.